

Lincoln County Courthouse
West side of the Common
Wiscasset
Lincoln County
Maine

HABS No. ME-97

HABS
ME
8-WISC
11-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

LINCOLN COUNTY COURTHOUSE

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Address: West side of the Common, Wiscasset, Lincoln County, Maine.

Present Owner and Occupant: Lincoln County

Present Use: Courthouse and county offices.

Brief Statement of Significance: This is a well-preserved courthouse, in active use since 1824.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: Lincoln County.
2. Date of erection: The erection of this building was first proposed by a committee of judges and others in 1818. At the May, 1823 term of the Court of Sessions, an agent was appointed to build the new courthouse. At a Wiscasset Town Meeting, May 17, 1823, it was resolved to give the county any lot of land they desired for the new courthouse. December 1, 1823, proposals for the courthouse were invited. The Lincoln Intelligencer (Wiscasset) for May 21, 1824 reported the laying of the corner stone on May 18, 1824. The offices in the new courthouse were occupied on December 20, 1824.
3. Builder, suppliers, etc.: Nathaniel Coffin, Esq., Clerk of the Courts, was appointed agent to build the courthouse May, 1823. Coffin chose Tileston Cushing of Bath as master builder. William West was master painter. Bragdon and Farnham, local carpenters, furnished frames, sash and blinds for twenty-five windows. William Smith did the iron work including the jail doors with locks, and the railing and balusters for the stone stairs. 289,862 bricks were procured locally, one third from John Porter, two thirds for E. Lowe. 12,780 pressed brick for the facade were procured from the Cargill yard in Newcastle. 2,596 floor and hearth tile also from E. Lowe. Window caps and marble keystones from B. Adams. Stone doorsteps, stone stairs, stone flagging from Oliver Whitcomb. Other stone from George Huff and Rufus Sewall, both of Edgecomb. Lime from Gleason and Keith of Thomaston. 3,638-1/2 bushels of sand from William Greenleaf of Wiscasset. Hair for plastering from the Stacy Tan Yard.
4. Original plans, construction, etc.: The original recommendation for the new courthouse in 1818 called for a fireproof building 44' x 40' x 30' high. On December 1, 1823 Agent Nathaniel Coffin invited proposals for a building 50' x 44' x 28' high to contain three fireproof offices and to be constructed and finished

nearly upon the plan of the courthouse in Portland, Maine, omitting however, all the expensive ornamental work. The total cost was \$10,843.09.

5. Notes on alterations and additions: June 1850, a committee consisting of Oscar Eaton, Arnold Blaney and Wales Hubbard recommended extending the court house 18' to the west (rear). These recommendations were followed out that same year, and at the same time the interior of the courtroom was altered so as to be of the same finish as that of Portland, Maine. A small wing added to the southwest corner has been removed, and in 1949 an office wing was added to the northwest corner by Bunker and Savage of Augusta, Maine. A second principal access to the original building is now by a corridor from this new wing.

6. Sources of information: Fannie S. Chase, Wiscasset in Pownalborough (Wiscasset, Maine, 1941), pp. 106-113, contains a detailed account of the history of the building.

William David Patterson, Old Wiscasset, revised by J. B. Doggett (Augusta, Maine: The Augusta Press, 1951).

Federal Writers' Project, Maine, A Guide "Down East" (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1937), p. 218.

Samuel M. Green, Exhibition of Maine Architecture from the 17th Century to the Civil War (Catalog of an exhibit arranged by The Art Department of Colby College, Waterville, Maine, 1945).

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: Here many noted judges have presided and many famous men have appeared; such as Daniel Webster, Benjamin F. Butler, T. B. Reed, Jeremiah Mason and others.

It is the oldest courthouse in Maine in point of continuous use.

C. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: Records kept by the clerk of court, Lincoln County Courthouse, which list all persons employed and all bills.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: "The Court House at Wiscasset is an illustration of the effect of the graceful proportions and use of arches which lend an Adam feeling even without the usual ornament". [Samuel M. Green, Exhibition of Maine Architecture from the 17th Century to the Civil War.]

2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Over-all dimensions: 44' (three-bay front) x 68' (six-bay sides), two stories, facing east.

2. Foundations: Large cut blocks of granite.

3. Wall construction: Brick, east (front) south and west walls in Flemish bond, north wall in common bond, pressed brick on front wall slightly larger than brick elsewhere, and smoother.

4. Porches: Recessed entrance porch in center bay of east front, elliptical in plan, brick vaulting, marble impost blocks and keystone, granite floor up three steps. The bays flanking the entrance porch have slightly recessed panels with semicircular tops forming an arcaded motif with the entrance porch along the ground floor of the front.

5. Chimneys: Three tall brick chimneys in each side wall.

6. Openings:

a. Doors: Main door in entrance porch, two-leaf-panel door with large lights, semicircular top light.

b. Windows and shutters: Double hung windows, twelve light sash, marble sills and splayed lintels. Single twelve-light sash in gable above entrance set in recessed panel similar to ground floor. No shutters but some shutter hardware in place on the rear.

7. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: Gable roof, asphalt shingles.

b. Cornice: Molded wood cornice, horizontal cornice carried across gable end to form pediment.

c. Tower: Two-stage tower above roof over east front. First stage, rectangular, clapboards, balustrade. Second stage, open octagonal with round, Doric columns, bell-shaped ogee roof with thin spire.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: The main floor is divided by an L-shaped corridor between the east front entrance and the later northwest wing. The municipal court is in the central part of the north side of the corridor and offices are around the south and west sides. A stairway at the northeast corner leads to a vestibule above the east front entrance porch which leads to a large second floor courtroom for Lincoln County. Judge and jury chambers are behind the courtroom at the west side of the second floor. A narrow stairway at the northeast corner leads from the second floor vestibule to a small, unused gallery overlooking the courtroom.

2. Stairways: Wide, main stairway to second floor of large, granite blocks, U-shaped with landing, iron railing with round balusters and flat handrail.

3. Flooring: Granite flagging on part of first floor, wood second floor. Later wood, concrete and tile floors in various places.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster, painted.

5. Doors and doorways: Flat-panel doors, molded frames, some pilaster trim on doorways; principal doorways have low, simple pediments.

6. Trim: Second floor courtroom has paneled gallery front and paneled doorways which close off gallery from courtroom. Mahogany railings, benches and tables in second floor courtroom.

7. Hardware: Butt hinges, mortise locks.

8. Lighting: Electric.

9. Heating: Central heat with radiators; original fireplaces apparently closed.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: Faces east on a gentle rise at the head of the town common, large lot with modern parking area in the rear. Large, frame meetinghouse on the south, U.S. Route 1 on the north.

2. Enclosures: Chain fence on granite posts at the front.

3. Landscaping: Lawn and large trees.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect
National Park Service
August 1962.

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LINCOLN COUNTY COURT HOUSE
High Street
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National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

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Data pages 1 through 4 were previously transmitted to the Library of Congress. This is data page 5.

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FRONT ELEVATION WITH SPIRE

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FRONT ELEVATION WITH SPIRE

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